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Jane Eyre
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JANE EYRE.

A DRAMA, IN FIVE ACTS.

ADAPTED FROM CHARLOTTE BRONTE'S NOVEL, BY JOHN BROUGHAM.



Dramatis Personæ.

[See page 14.

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S T A G E D I R E C T I O N S .

EXITS AND ENTRANCES.—*R.* means *Right*; *L.* *Left*; *D. F.* *Door in Flat*; *R. D.* *Right Door*; *L. D.* *Left Door*; *S. E.* *Second Entrance*; *U. E.* *Upper Entrance*; *M. D.* *Middle Door*; *L. U. E.* *Left Upper Entrance*; *R. U. E.* *Right Upper Entrance*; *L. S. E.* *Left Second Entrance*; *P. S.* *Prompt Side*; *O. P.* *Opposite Prompt*.

RELATIVE POSITIONS.—*R.* means *Right*; *L.* *Left*; *C.* *Centre*; *R. C.* *Right of Centre*; *L. C.* *Left of Centre*.

R.

R. C.

C.

L. C.

L.

* * The Reader is supposed to be on the Stage, facing the Audience.

JANE EYRE.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A very plain chamber in Lowood Academy—window practicable, but barred, prison-like.* MISS GRyce and MISS TEMPLE discovered.

Enter MISS SCATCHERD L. H. 2 E.

Miss S. Here's a fine to do! who do you think is coming here directly?

Miss T. I cannot say, Miss Scatcherd.

Miss S. The veritable Mr. Brocklehurst himself. The generous endower of this most benevolent institution, for the confusion of intellect and suppression of liberty.

Miss T. For shame, Miss Scatcherd; you must not speak so.

Miss S. I'll say what I think, in spite of anybody. Heaven knows I'm sick enough of this dungeon.

Miss T. So indeed am I. But I must fulfil my destiny.

Miss S. Pshaw! a fig for destiny. I'm resolved when Mr. Brocklehurst does come, to give him a piece of my mind. I'll say to him—

Enter BROCKLEHURST L. H. 2 E.

Brock. What will you say, my dear Miss Scatcherd?

Miss S. I hope you find yourself quite well today, sir.

Brock. Remarkably well, I thank you. Miss Temple, your most obedient. I congratulate you all, ladies, upon the general appearance of your interesting pupils. But—pray be seated—I regret, and believe me, it gives me, as a man and a Christian, inexpressible pain to be obliged to reprove. I regret, I say, to find that the rules of the establishment have been, I would almost say, criminally neglected.

Miss T. I am sure, sir, not of our own—

Brock. Ah—suffer me. How is it, Madame—I address you as superintendent and controller of this place—how is it that the woollen stockings are not better attended to?

Miss T. Indeed, sir, I—

Brock. Ah—pardon me. I find also, in settling accounts with the housekeeper, that a lunch, consisting of bread and cheese, has twice been served to the girls within the last fortnight. By whose authority was this shameful innovation? May I be permitted to request an answer, direct and unequivocal?

Miss T. I must be responsible for the circumstance, sir; the breakfast was ill prepared, and—

Brock. Allow me. You are aware that my plan

in bringing up these girls is, not to accustom them to habits of luxury.

Miss G. There's no doubt about that—

Brock. Miss Gryce, if you please—but on the contrary, by spare diet and wholesome exercise, to render them hardy, patient, and self-denying, and encourage them to evince fortitude, under temporary privation.

Miss G. Starvation?

Brock. Privation, Miss Gryce. That woman's deafness is very inconvenient. Oh! madam, when you put bread and cheese, instead of thin water-gruel, into those children's bodies, you little think how you starve their immortal souls.

Miss G. You are right, sir, the poor things are starved nearly.

Brock. Silence. And now, Madame, I come to the most awful dereliction of all. I observed as I passed through the school that one girl, if not more, had her hair decked in the absurd vanity of curls, absolute cork-screw curls.

Miss T. It is Julia Severn, sir. Her hair curls naturally.

Brock. Naturally! Madame! don't attempt to hide your negligence under such a paltry plea. What have we to do with nature?

Miss G. Nothing.

Brock. Miss Temple, that girl's hair must be cut off. I will not have a curl or a top-knot in the school. I want those charges to become the children of grace, not the offshoots of vanity. Where is Jane Eyre?

Miss T. She has retired to her room, sir; her health is failing under the close confinement.

Brock. Impossible! close confinement here? Why she must be out of her senses.

Miss G. Nearly.

Brock. I don't believe a word of it, it's nothing but laziness. If she does not attend to her duties to-morrow, she must seek elsewhere for a situation, and they are not to be picked up so easily; and now, ladies, I will take my leave, trusting that the reproof which conscientious feelings alone urge me to make will sink deep within your hearts, and ultimately spring up into the sweet-smelling flower of repentance and amendment. Good day.

[Exit Brocklehurst, L. H. 2 E.]

Enter JANE EYRE, L. H.

Jane. Ah, aunt, aunt! you do not, you cannot know the bitter slavery to which your hate has doomed me: eight long years of joyless, hopeless, pitiless imprisonment—life dragged along in one unvarying level, in the very springtime of my youth—with heart and brain astir, and yearning

for the love of kindred, full of bright thoughts and glorious impulses, the world and all its chances, changes, forever closed against me—it is terrible. Oh, for freedom! freedom! My heart bounds like an imprisoned bird against its wiry barrier, at the mere thought—freedom—blessed freedom; those only, who lose thee, know thy worth. (*Throws open window.*) Oh, I have prayed for liberty until my loud cry seemed scattered on the passing wind. I cannot rest—I cannot think—my tortured brain, in wild confusion, whirls. Heaven send me a change, no matter what—a break to this heart-cankering monotony—a change, or I shall go mad.

Enter MISS GRUYCE.

Miss G. Perhaps you may have one sooner than you anticipate.

Jane. How! speak! is there such a hope?

Miss G. Brocklehurst has been here, and I took advantage of my slight deafness to give him a few stings.

Jane. Poor girl, his heart is clad in steel, no mortal can reach it; but you hinted at a change; what do you mean?

Miss G. In the first place, he says you are not sick, that it's nothing but laziness.

Jane. The hypocrite! the false-tongued hypocrite! Go on.

Miss G. And that unless you attend to your duties, you'll have to go.

Jane. Where?

Miss G. Anywhere,—out into the road; he'd do it.

Jane. He would—I know he would. What shall I do? Oh, pity me, for I need pity much. Homeless, friendless, and an orphan; what is to become of me?

Miss G. Why don't you try and get something to do?

Jane. Have I not done so? Have I not, in the faint hope of, at least, changing my servitude, advertised for the situation of a governess? I have served here for eight years, and I would fain serve elsewhere; I know it would but be an exchange of prisons, but even that variety would be a boon. A new place in a new house, with new faces, it does not sound as sweet as liberty, excitement, enjoyment; but alas! they are all equally hollow and flattering, and to me it is a mere waste of words to utter them.

Miss G. Don't grieve so terribly; who knows what this letter may contain?

Jane. (*Starting up.*) For me! Gryce!

(*Fiercely.*)

Miss G. What! don't look at me so awfully.

Jane. You are one who would see the fire laid to the stake before you would produce the wretch's pardon.

Miss G. I was afraid it might contain bad news.

Jane. There is no bad news for me, the slightest change becomes an incident; a drop of water in the endless desert of my existence is as a mighty river. (*Reads.*) Oh kind, benignant Providence, my prayers are heard at last! Listen. (*Reads.*) "If J. E. is in a condition to give satisfactory reference as to character and capacity"—(that they must not, dare not refuse me,) "a situation can be offered to her where there is but one pupil, a little girl, under ten years of age, and where the salary—" Oh, I care not for that. "Apply to Mrs. Fairfax, Thornfield."

Miss G. Thornfield, why it's not more than two hours' walk from here.

Jane. My heart is full, and forces from my eyes the unaccustomed tears. Years—long years of suffering misery are forgotten in this one moment of delight. Now my aspiring thought will have fit element to work within; high hopes and wild imaginings are crowding through my brain. I feel as though I were revelling in dream-land, and as with a lightning flash, the rocky barrier is rent that kept me from communion with my kind. Oh, world! oh, bright and glorious world! thy doors are opened to me at last!

[*Exit, R. H.*]

SCENE II.—*Drawing-room, elegantly furnished, in Mr. Rochester's House.*—The DOWAGER LADY INGRAM, LADY BLANCHE INGRAM, LADY MARY INGRAM, MRS. DENT, LORD INGRAM, COLONEL DENT, and FREDERICK LYNN, discovered.

Dow. What an extraordinary creature that Rochester is! what can possibly detain him so long, away? If it were any other person, I should certainly feel annoyed at the host's absence.

Lord Ing. For my part, *cher mama*, I think it's all the better; he is such a half-savage, whole-ride of a fellow, one can never feel at home with him.

Col. Dent. Yes; and so long as he leaves such glorious wine to be drank, noble horses to be ridden, and splendid game to pop at, what the deuce is it to us?

Lord Ing. He certainly is a most eccentric animal.

Blan. I love eccentricity.

Lord Ing. Especially when said eccentricity is mated with enormous riches, and both look sideways towards you: if I were in your place I should love it prodigiously.

Dow. Now, Ingram, don't be so impertinent; poor Blanche is absolutely blushing.

Lord Ing. What Arcadian simplicity! For Heaven's sake, Blanche, let me see it. Natural colour upon a fashionable cheek—preposterous!

Col. Dent. Decidedly out of place.

Lord Ing. Vulgar in the extreme!

Col. Dent. Absurd!

Lord Ing. And utterly dairymaidish.

Blan. Brother, you have no heart.

Lord Ing. Haven't I, by Jove! ask Dent.

Col. Dent. Don't ask me: I never saw any indication of the article, except you held it in your hand when you were playing cards.

Lord Ing. And by Jupiter, it's the only way you'll ever see mine, unless associated with diamonds. By the bye, your heart, sister, has the benefit of such brilliant companionship.

Dow. Ingram, I command you to be silent on that subject; the establishment of a daughter is not so frivolous a matter as you may imagine.

Lord Ing. I know, amiable maternity and hearts have nothing whatever to do with it.

Dow. Nothing in the world!

Lord Ing. But goes to the purchaser, like the fixtures in leasing a house.

Dow. Precisely: I wonder if it was Rochester who came in the carriage a short time since. Dent, oblige me by touching the bell. (*Dent rings.*) Blanche, my love, brighten your eyes with a little of this bouquet. (*Gives small phial.*) If it should be Rochester, don't let him find us moping.

Enter JOHN, L. H.

John. That's a bright lot, the old tabby and the young kittens; the characters of all their female acquaintance are just like so many mice to them. Oh! what delight it is to seize hold of them one by one, and purr, and scratch, and worry.

Dow. John!

John. Yes, my lady, Monser. (*Aside.*)

Dow. Was that Mr. Rochester who arrived just now.

John. No, my lady. Now I'll tease her a bit; she won't like to ask me who it is. I know she'll have to, though.

Dow. Not Mr. Rochester?

John. No, my lady.

Dow. More friends, I presume?

John. No, my lady.

Dow. I certainly heard a carriage stop.

John. Yes, my lady.

Dow. I thought I couldn't be mistaken.

John. No, my lady.

Dow. A stranger?

John. Yes, my lady.

Dow. Indeed—a gentleman?

John. No, my lady.

Dow. A lady?

John. No, my lady.

Dow. Neither a gentleman or a lady? how stupid you are. Who can it be?

John. Only the new governess, my lady.

Dow. Governess! pshaw! how very provoking!

Lord Ing. Frightful waste of sympathy, eh, Dent?

Col. Dent. Excruciating, my lord.

Lord Ing. All about some poor devil of a teacher. Do you recollect, Blanche, how we used to quiz your round of governesses?

Blan. Oh, yes, Theodore; what fun we used to have with them. Mary was always too sleepy to join in our plots.

Dow. Now, my darling pets, don't mention governesses; the very word makes me nervous.

Blan. And do you remember, Theodore, how we used to persecute your tutor?

Lord Ing. Yes, the poor, pale-faced wretch; he was positively ignorant of the commonest rudiments of education—didn't know a terrier from a bull-dog, and never saw a badger in the whole course of his life.

Col. Dent. The Hottentot!

Lord Ing. (*To Blanche.*) I say, Blanche, wouldn't it be a prime lark to have up this new governess, and see what she's like.

Blan. Famous, Theodore! I do love to see them blush and tremble when they first find themselves in an aristocratic element. Ma won't like it, though.

Lord Ing. That don't signify, we shall have better fun. John!

John. My lord.

Lord Ing. Bring some liqueur, and trot out the new governess.

John. Yes, my lord.

[Exit, L. H.]

Lord Ing. I say, Dent, I've just been laying the train for a grand explosion of fun.

Col. Dent. What, sacking the cellar?

Lord Ing. No. I'm going to introduce a lamb amongst those old Dowager Lionnesses. My dear, so you have a prejudice against governesses.

Dow. Don't mention the horrid name, or I shall certainly faint.

Enter JOHN, L. H.

John. The new governess. (*Dowager screams.*) Lord Ing. Bravo, John; consider yourself a sovereign richer for that.

Enter JANE, L. H.—Recoils timidly at first, but rapidly collects herself.

Lord Ing. Dent, you ruffian, is not that a master stroke of comedy? See the poor timid fawn! How she shrinks from those high-blooded gruffins!

Jane. (*Advancing firmly.*) I am either constrained to apologize for the ignorance of a servant, or I am obliged to suffer for his malice. It was not of my own will that I intruded here, for I was not aware there was so distinguished an assembly.

Lord Ing. Dem good, by Jupiter! Eh, Dent?

Col. Dent. Admirable!

Jane. You will excuse me if I retire.

Lord Ing. Oh, dem it, no; 'twould be ending the comedy in first scene. Don't tear yourself away.

Jane. Am I to undertand that I was sent for?

Lord Ing. Yes, certainly. I did myself that honour.

Jane. Indeed! that makes an essential difference. It allows me at least the condition of equality. John, will you oblige me with a seat? (*John places seat.*) Request Mrs. Fairfax, the housekeeper, to send for me here, if my services are required.(*John laughs, aside, but very respectful to her.*)

John. Yes, my lady—I mean madam. Bravo! jolly good, by jingo!

Lord Ing. Delicious! John, you brigand, you'll ruin me. I owe you another sovereign.

John. Yes, and that's all I'm likely to get of it.

[Exit, L. H.]

Dow. (*Aside to guests.*) Did you ever see more consummate boldness? And, I declare, there's that foolish Mary going to speak to her.Lord Ing. She's a magnificent creature, Dent, by Jove! Let's have a close look at her.—(*Dent and Ingram walk round Jane, with quizzing glasses.*)—Bears close inspection too, by Jove!

Col. Dent. Yes, as close as you can get—those eyes are dangerous, too near.

Jane. (*To Mary, who has been trying to make her feel at home.*) The thanks, deep and sincere, of a lonely heart are yours, my dear young lady; one touch of sympathy can obliterate volumes of looked and spoken insolence; but fear not for me. The mind that's conscious of its own superiority stands on too high an eminence to be reached by the petty shafts of pride and ignorance.

Lord Ing. Does she mean anything—eh, Dent?

Col. Dent. Hang me if I know. I wish I had some of Rochester's burgundy.

Dow. Does the creature intend to stay here, I wonder?

Blan. She has confidence enough, I do believe.

Lord Ing. Demme if she hasn't put a wet blanket on the party—eh, Dent?

Col. Dent. A regular soaker.

Lord Ing. The Dowagers are shut up famously—confound me if I don't feel somehow demised awkward myself. Dent, stir up the people, or this dem governess will think she has cowed us all.

Col. Dent. Why don't you go and talk to her?

Lord Ing. I would if I knew what to say.

Col. Dent. Don't be a fool—nonplussed by a governess!

Lord Ing. Demmit, that'll never do—(Stalks across dandified)—aw—Miss; aw—I haven't the honour of your name.

Jane. Jane Eyre—you are?—

Lord Ing. Theodore, commonly called Lord Ingram—and so you are—aw—Jane Eyre. Yes, delighted—do you know, Jane, that you're devilish pretty?

Jane. My lord!

Lord Ing. Upon my life you are—ch, Dent?

Col. Dent. Undoubtedly.

Jane. Sir, your sisters, I believe, are in the room—were anyone to address either of them as you have now addressed me, what would be the result?

Lord Ing. Positively, I don't know, I can't imagine; it's a very different thing—they are—

Jane. Made of different clay; their hearts are more sensitive, their feelings more refined, perhaps. Reverse the picture, my lord, and you will be nearer to the truth. In the school of poverty is oftener found that intuitive delicacy which fears to wound—inured to suffering themselves, they know and feel for that in others.

Lord Ing. A regular sermon, by Jupiter! quite Addisonian. Did you get that out of the *Spectator*?

Jane. My lord, ignorant assumption, much as it may be involuntary, is simply pitiable; but insolence, where you know it cannot be averted, is cowardly!

Lord Ing. Dent, damme, did you hear that?

Col. Dent. Distinctly!

Lord Ing. And must I swallow it? Oh, how I wish you were a man.

Jane. Pray calm yourself, my lord. I shall retire, not out of dread of your contumely, but from very pity of your infirmities; and it may be that the poor, lowly-nurtured drudge, whom you sent for to bring you unworthy amusement, will have given you a wholesome, though unwelcome lesson.

[Exit Jane, L. H.]

Lord Ing. Snubbed, by Jove!

Col. Dent. Prodigiously.

Tableau of Astonishment.

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE I.—Apartment in Mr. Rochester's house.

Enter GRACE POOL, with a piece of cake and a pint of porter, followed by JOHN, R. H.

John. Come now, Mrs. Grace, I'll tell you what it is. I ain't a-going to stand your capers. I never was in a family yet that I wasn't made acquainted with the secrets thereof; here have I been three live-long weeks, and I don't know nothing yet; it's disgraceful.

Grace. Very!

John. There's a mysterious mystery hanging about the place somewhere, and I'm blessed if I don't find it out.

Grace. Do!

John. I will, you may take your davy. Won't you tell me?

Grace. No!

John. Then I must depend upon my natural genius to find it out. There was a jolly rumpus last night; who is it laughs in that awful manner every now and then?

Grace. Me.

John. You? pooh! don't tell me.

Grace. I won't.

John. There's something a-going on in this house that isn't right, and a fellow-servant as won't confide in a fellow-servant don't deserve to belong to our honourable profession. How can we stand up for our masters and missies unless we knows their little imperfections? it keeps them in order, and makes wages a deal more reg'lar. I know a thing or two. You don't know what I am.

Grace. I do!

John. What am I; now let's know.

Grace. A fool!

John. Am I? then there's a pair of us; but never mind. I won't be beholden to you. The master will be home soon, and while there's key-holes in the world, and ears ain't scarce, there ain't a master in the world can keep a secret from a servant as is determined to find it out; that you may take your oath of. Don't keep on a-munching of that cake as if you really thought you were hurting it and it did you good to bite so savagely. The new governess will be here to-day, then your nose will be out of joint, thank fortune.

Grace. Will it?

John. Won't it?

Grace. No!

John. Then you're pretty certain of your situation whatever may come into the house!

Grace. Yes!

John. Now then, I know there's a something.

Grace. Indeed!

John. Yes, and if I don't come at it I'm a Dutchman.

Grace. Don't try.

John. None of your gammon. You want to frighten me. Why do you always eat in your own room? or walking about like a hungry ghost, and not amongst us as you ought to. But I know a way to penetrate the mystery.

Grace. How?

John. This way. (Opens door, scream heard.)

Grace. Stop!

John. (Frightened.) I saw it! oh, lord! it's true! I heard so.

Grace. What?

John. That the house was haunted. Grace, what was that fearful-looking thing?

Grace. Nothing!

John. Didn't you hear a scream?

Grace. No!

John. I'll take my oath I saw something.

Grace. Fool!

John. You're not a-going in?

Grace. Yes!

John. Don't! don't!

Grace. Go!

[Exit through door in flat, L. H.]
John. I will; my eyes could not have deceived me, and my ears, too. Here's a beautifully-awful mystery, a ghost in the house; there's something delightfully frightful in having one's feelings harrowed up and agitated all ways at once. I've a great mind to peep, just to see if I was right. Pooh! don't be a coward, heart. I declare I'm goose-fleshing all over; my hair is getting wiry, and my knees wretchedly rheumatic. Pooh! here goes!

(Approaches door, a wild laugh heard, he bolts precipitately, falls on his knees. GRACE enters with dress, touches him on the shoulder.)

John. Oh! don't; have pity, good ghost. I'll never be curious again! I won't! I won't!

Grace. Don't!

John. Is it you? Oh, good gracions! what a coward I am! Oh! there's a good soul, tell me what I saw in the room.

Grace. (Holding up dress.) Look!

John. Nothing but a white dress. Hurrah! Pleasant as it is to be mysteriously terrified, it's much more agreeable to be not. Oh! I could, I really could, very nearly, be induced to embrace you. Indeed, my own feelings have undergone such a complete upsetting that I do believe I could almost kiss you.

Grace. Fool!

John. You're right, of the long-earedst description, but I'm cured. I'll never dive into secret mysteries again.

[Exit, R. H., Grace through door.]

SCENE II.—Garden; bright moonlight.

Enter JANE, L. H., despondingly, leans against balcony.

Jane. Shame, shame upon their cruelty; the pride that blazed within me is quenched in the flood of my great disappointment. Is this the pleasant change which I had pictured? This is the hard sterile rock my distant hope had tinted over with the softest moonlight. Better, a thousand times better, my solitary cell once more, than be gibed and mocked at by the vulgar-wealthy; to have the badge of servitude engraved upon my very heart, and know that tyrant circumstance has placed me in a world all prison, where every human being is a watchful jailor, and where you must endure the unceasing lash of insolence, the certain punishment of that statuteless but unforgiven crime, poverty. But why should I weep; it is my destiny—my stark and joyless destiny, and I must school myself, if not to be content therewith, at least to endure without a murmur. (Noise outside.)

Roch. (Supposed to have fallen from his horse.) How, Mesrou, what's to do now? you've hurt me, you ungrateful beast.

Jane. It is a traveller, who has fallen from his horse.

Roch. (Outside.) Hallo! you hedge phantom, since you have frightened my horse away, the least you can do will be to help me up.

Jane. With pleasure, sir.

[Exit, R. H.]

Roch. (Outside.) Pleasure, indeed; it ain't much pleasure to break a limb, is it?

Jane. Lean on me sir; you are not injured, I hope?

Enter JANE and ROCHESTER, R. H. U. E.

Roch. Not injured! what a fool you must be; to be tumbled upon a hard rocky road doesn't necessarily give a man the most pleasurable sensations.

Jane. I am sorry, sir, indeed I am.

Roch. Pooh! don't talk nonsense! why should you besorry?

Jane. If it was through my being here that your horse was startled, sir, I must feel sorrow for your accident.

Roch. I'd advise you not to waste any sympathy on my account, it will be a bad investment of valueless capital.

Jane. I may at least inquire if you are seriously hurt.

Roch. I don't recognise your right! Who are you? and what brings you here at this time of the night? Go away home, if you have any.

Jane. I cannot think of leaving you, sir, until I see that you can assist yourself.

Roch. Can't you, indeed; you are rather a peremptory apparition,—where do you come from? Have you descended from a moonbeam, or are you a discontented Hamadryad, escaped from your oakey prison? Are you quite sure that you haven't bewitch'd my horse!

Jane. I live at yonder house, sir; shall I run and obtain some assistance, for I know that you are suffering much pain, notwithstanding your apparent carelessness.

Roch. Hold your tongue; you live there, do you?

Jane. Yes, sir.

Roch. Whose house is it?

Jane. Mr. Rochester's.

Roch. Indeed! do you know him?

Jane. No; I have never seen him; and if he resembles the majority of his visitors, I have no wish.

Roch. You are not a servant, of course; I see you are not. Forgive me. You'll find me rough, but not rude; though what is it to you whether I am or not. May I inquire who you are?

Jane. The governess, sir.

Roch. Ah! the governess! where do you come from?

Jane. From Lowood school.

Roch. That charitable concern over the way; how long were you there?

Jane. Eight years.

Roch. Eight years! you must be tenacious of life; I thought half the time in such a place would have done up any constitution. Who are your parents?

Jane. I have none.

Roch. But you had I suppose; do you remember them? You think me impertinent, I perceive; never mind, it doesn't signify. Who were you waiting for here? did you know know I was returning? but how could you?—there, I think I can walk now. Lend me your arm. Have you an umbrella? No matter, I can hobble along pretty well.

Jane. You are suffering, sir—I know you are.

Roch. Well, what's that to you; confound it, can't you let me suffer quietly; don't for pity's sake fall into the common error of worldly friends, who think that condoling with you on your misfortunes, ameliorates them, the fools, when forgetfulness would be mercy, their tongues are never quiet; but where's your curiosity—are you not dying to know who I am?

Jane. I have no such unwarrantable desire, sir.

Roch. Ah, that's a famous sting for me; but I may as well tell you at once; that then is my home, ah! (expression of disgust) the casket of my treasure—look at those brilliant casements, those ivy covered battlements, those old ancestral trees, that smoothly shaven lawn, that richly variegated garden, is it not an earthly paradise?

Jane. It is indeed, externally a—

Roch. What do you mean, do you know? Externally—why not internally; ah, your eye is placid—pshaw! it is a large pest-house, there is a memento written in the air in lurid characters, which—but is it not an enviable retreat?

Jane. Most enviable.

Roch. Aye, even to the arch fiend himself, so full of delicious memories, that I cannot but dally with my happiness, even within its very sight—but come, the threshold must be passed.

John. (*Outside, L. H.*) He's here—I see him.

Enter Servants with torches, then LORD INGRAM furred, COL. DENT, &c. &c., L. H. U. E.

Lord Ing. Rochester, my dear boy, you gave us a deuce of a fright, made me feel remarkably queer. Your horse rushed into the stable, all in a foam, without you.

Roch. That will do; you see it is accounted for.

Lord Ing. But my sister Blanche, you know the tender interest she takes in you.

Roch. Is she here?

Lord Ing. No, she's fainting most grammatically in the drawing-room.

Roch. Silence, puppy—home! (*to Servants.*) come, my Samaritan.

(*Rochester and Jane go towards entrance to house—Servants range at each side with torches.*)

Col. Dent. How do you feel, Ingram?

Lord Ing. Snubbed again, by Jove! The dem Rhinoceros!

(*Music.—Curtain.*)

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*Temporary Stage with curtains in drawing-room—preparation for the Charade—JOHN fastening curtains, &c., ROBERT assists.*

Rob. What be these circums for, John?

John. Bless your unsophisticated ignorance, these are the games that shut up theatres; this is for domestic play acting—what with charades, as they call them, tableaux, and fancy performances, in drawing-rooms, the bread is fairly taken out of the poor people's mouths as makes it a purfession. I once had some ambition to be a player myself, but since the quality has taken it up, I've altered my mind.

Rob. I say, John, when do you think the wedding will take place; I like weddings—housekeepers don't limit a chap's ale.

John. Whose wedding?

Rob. Why, Mr. Rochester's, with that there high-flyer, Miss Ingram.

John. Permit me, sir, as your superior in office, to give you a word of advice. Never you inquire about nothing, nor never you wonder at nothing. Specially in this enchanted castle.

Rob. Well I won't; but you'll tell us what these charades is.

John. The servants can come to the door and see them, then you'll be likely to know.

Rob. You're very kind.

John. I tell you what it is, I can't get no satisfaction from anybody, and I'm resolved not to give no satisfaction to nobody; see if that there curtain will work.

(*Curtain drawn, discovers GRACE POOL with her cake and pint of beer.*)

John. Hillo, what brought you there? look, Bob, that's what the gentry call a tablee.

Rob. Why, that's half-witted Grace, with her everlasting pint of beer.

John. What are you doing there, Grace?

Grace. Eating.

Rob. Here, Grace. She knows everything if she'd only let it out. (*Grace comes down.*) Is there going to be a wedding in the house?

Grace. No!

Rob. When will there?

Grace. Never. (*Noise of company.*)

John. Hillo, here they come. Bob, down with the curtain! Grace, bundle out.

Grace. No!

John. But don't you hear the company's coming from the drawing-room!

Grace. Yes.

John. Come, you must be off.

Grace. Shan't.

John. Here they are. Well, I don't care, you old fool. Won't there be a rumpus.

Grace. Brute!

Enter DOWAGER, LADY INGRAM and all the guests. All stare with astonishment at Grace.

Lord Ing. By Jove, what a character! it's Rochester dressed up; no, it isn't.

Grace. Beer!

Dow. It must be one of the visitors in a fancy dress. Whoever you are, disclose yourself.

Grace. Cake?

Lord Ing. Capital, by Jupiter!
[*Grace offers her beer all around, then stalks across mysteriously, and exit.*]

Col. Dent. Who the deuce can it be?

Lord Ing. I have it! you remember on the occasion of our last visit here, we heard sundry mysterious noises, at strange times, putting one's nerves in an inelegant state of agitation. This must be the cause, depend upon it. It's a lunatic servant that Rochester don't like to get rid of.

Dow. Dear me, suppose she had hurt somebody? Ah, here comes that odious governess; six months hasn't made her a whit more humble. I wonder Rochester keeps her here.

Lord Ing. Because he's a dem'd original, and does nothing like anybody else: with his countless mine of money, it's astonishing how barbarous he is. I'm sure when we were in town last season, I used all my endeavours to transmute his rugged iron into smooth, fashionable gold, but all my efforts were of no avail. One might as well try to civilize a polar bear or teach an alligator the polka.

Enter ROCHESTER.

Ah, my dear Rochester, the sound of your praise has scarcely done echoing through the apartment. We are all dying with anxiety to see what Charade is about to be presented.

Roch. Where is Miss Eyre? John, tell Miss Eyre to come here.

Lord Ing. Demmit, Rochester, have a little feeling for the Dowager. You know how she dislikes the atmosphere of a domestic.

Roch. The instructress of my child, my lord, ranks amongst the foremost of my friends; my acquaintances surely need not blush to be in such society.

Enter JANE.

Jane. You sent for me, sir?

Roch. I did, Miss Eyre. Sit down; I presume you care as little as myself for those frivolous pastimes, and yet they may amuse you. (*Aside.*)

I cannot struggle against the heart spell she has thrown around me. Spite of the dark chasm of the future, my soul is hurried onward with the very speed of destiny. Could she but love me sufficient to brave all—this day shall prove it.

Enter JOHN with letter which he gives to ROCHESTER.

Excuse me friends; what's this? (*Reads. "Depart at once; a matter of grave importance."*) You hear, friends, how abruptly I am summoned; but let not my absence check your enjoyment; I shall return as quickly as I can.

[*Exit Rochester.*]

Lord Ing. Ah, Miss Eyre. Pray, how do you find yourself? don't be under any apprehension! I have forgotten what passed between us during my last visit.

Jane. Indeed! my lord. I congratulate you upon the complaisance of your memory. I wish I had so obliging a recollection.

Lord Ing. Why, have you not forgotten it?

Jane. No, my lord, nor ever shall!

Lord Ing. What an unforgiving creature!

Jane. Pardon me, it is forgiven long since, that is my share of the transaction, to teach me to forget it, must be yours.

Lord Ing. Ah! yes. You're too dem'd metaphysical for me! (*Small bell.*)

Col. Dent. The signal to prepare for the Charade.

(*Servants appear at stage doors; crowding their heads amongst them, Grace, John, Bob, &c.*)

Col. Dent. Who are to be the representatives?

Lord Ing. Mr. Rochester.

Col. Dent. And your lovely sister, of course!

Lord Ing. I suppose so. If he's going to marry her, I wish he'd make haste about it. I want to cut in for a slice of his ready—

Col. Dent. Silence! Here comes the first syllable.

(*Curtain rises to music, and discovers Lady Blanche dressed as bride, two bridesmaids attending; Tableau—Music.*)

Lord Ing. Superb, by Jove! Blanche is rehearsing for the Mrs. Rochester role, evidently.

Col. Dent. But what is the syllable intended?

Lord Ing. Don't ask me. I never fatigue my brain with thinking.

Dow. It must be — Bride.

All. Certainly!

Col. Dent. Now for the second syllable.

(*Tableau of Rebecca at the well, after Victor Adam—Music.*)

Lord Ing. We all know what it is,—fountain!

Dent. No; Bride fountain, spells no word that I know of.

Dow. I know it,—it must be WELL!

All. So it is. (*They applaud.*)

Dent. Now for the Tableau of the whole word.

(*Curtain: Tableau of the Momentous question.*)

Dent. Capital, by Jove,—“Bride-well,” ain't it, Miss Eyre?

Jane. Pardon me, sir, but I was not attending to the exhibition.

Lord Ing. Perhaps you object to such frivolous amusement?

Jane. My objections, my lord, carry but little weight.

Lord Ing. Modest creature!

Enter JOHN.

John. If you please, my lady, there's an old gipsy has ensconced himself by the library fire, and nothing can induce him to go.

Dow. The wretched person; what does he want?

John. He wants to tell the gentry their fortunes, and swears he won't leave till he does.

Lady Blanche. Oh! ma! do let us see him, it is so deliciously romantic.

Lord Ing. What is he like?

John. As old as Methuselah, and as ugly as a scare-crow, my lord.

Lord Ing. Then let's see him, it would be a thousand pities to lose such a chance of making fun of the old sorcerer.

John. He says whoever wants him must go to him.

Dent. An independent wizard; suppose I lead the way.

Lord Ing. No; let Blanche propitiate the fellow.

Dow. I cannot possibly countenance any such inconsistent proceeding.

Blanche. Indeed, ma, but you can and will; I have a curiosity to have my fortune told: John, lead the way.

Dow. Oh, my best—oh, my dearest, consider—

Blanche. Ma, don't be foolish!

[*Exit with John.*]

Dow. Oh, my beloved darling; if anything should happen to her, I should never forgive myself. Theodore, why don't you rush to the protection of your precious sister.

Lord Ing. Don't alarm yourself, perturbed maternity; Blanche can take good care of her precious self.

Dow. Oh, you have no sympathy for a mother's feelings.

Lord Ing. No! never had; don't think I ever shall.

Dow. A horrible presentiment of evil oppresses me; I do believe if she don't come instantly I shall be positively obliged to faint.

Lord Ing. Don't throw away a scene, indiscreet woman; there are no strangers present.

Lady Mary. Ma, I'm frightened.

Dow. So am I, my timid dove.

L. Mary. This silence is inexpressively awful.

Dow. Perfectly appalling.

Lord Ing. Absolutely execruciating—ha! ha!

Dent, for gracious sake, look at the interesting old hen and her one little chick. Here she comes; calm your fluttering hearts.

Enter BLANCHE.

Dow. (*Rushes to her.*) She's safe; my own is safe.

L. Mary. Well, love, what did he say?

Lord Ing. What did he do?

Col. Dent. How did he look?

Dow. How do you feel, precious?

Blanche. Now, good people, don't press on me; restrain your curiosity. I have seen a gipsy imposter, who endeavoured to practise the usual cheating of his kind; and I treated the knavery as it deserved, with contempt.

Dow. But tell me, love, did he say anything about—you know what—Rochester, you know?

(*Jane expresses anxiety.*)

Blanche. It's perfectly laughable—he told me this marriage should never take place.

Dow. How absurd.

(All go up laughing.)

Lord Ing. Very likely.

Jane. Ha! why does that sentence thrill through my frame, sharp and stunning as a shock of electricity; what is it to me—oh, weak, weak, foolish heart, strive not against thy betters; down to thy station, down!

[Exit, R. H.]

SCENE II.—Enter JOHN, L. H., meeting Jane Eyre.

John. Please, miss, the gipsy won't go without seeing you.

Jane. You mistake, John, it must be one of the visitors he wishes to see.

John. No, miss, he must be something not right, for he described you wonderful. What shall I tell him?

Jane. That I will go, by all means. He may be in want of something; it's only those who have felt privation themselves who ever think that there is such a thing in the world as want.

John. If you like, miss, I'll wait in the hall, and if he frightens you, call out and I'll see if the ditch water agrees with his gipsy stomach.

Jane. No, John, return to the kitchen; I am not in the least afraid.

[Exit Jane, L. H.]

John. Oh, Lord! the mysteriousness gets thicker than ever. Not content with having a ghost in the house, we must have a gipsy now. I wish the fellow would tell me my fortune. No I don't; for I'd rather not know it, if it's at all shy; and in the natural course of events I don't see any other chance for poor me. I only wish I was married and settled out of this nest of hobgoblins. That there Grace would make a good sort of wife for a chap, she's so chary with her syllables, and that's a good point. I wonder where she is? It's nice and dark and romantic; just the time to whisper soft nonsenses. I've a great mind to find her. I will too. I'll just take a glass of strong beer, and open my heart to her like a house a-fire.

GRACE appears at D. in F. with plate, &c.

Grace. That inquisitive fool here. I'll soon get rid of him.

(Re-enters door. A groan heard.)

John. Good gracious, what's that? I'll swear I heard a groan in that room. (Goes towards door.) Pshaw! the keyhole's stuffed up. (A crash of crockery and loud laugh.) The ghost! the ghost! oh, lord!

[Exit hastily, R. H.]

Enter GRACE.

Grace. It's well for us he's such a coward. Now to relieve his terror. John, what's the matter?

[Exit R. H.]

SCENE III.—The Library; Stage partially dark—wood fire blazing on hearth.

ROCHESTER as Gipsy, and JANE EYRE discovered—the red light from the fire falls on his face.

Roch. Here we shall be more quiet; for I have a good deal to say to you, and hate listeners—you see that I know the house well; aye, and all who

are in it. Ah! you doubt me. I knew that, you see—but to the proof. Come, you want your fortune told?

Jane. I don't care about it, you may please yourself; but you are right in your conjecture—I have no faith.

Roch. My conjecture, silly mortal—my knowledge. I heard it in your step just now.

Jane. Did you?—you have a quick ear.

Roch. I have, and a quick eye and a quick brain.

Jane. You need them all in your trade.

Roch. Especially when I have customers like you to deal with. Why don't you tremble?

Jane. I'm not cold.

Roch. Why don't you turn pale?

Jane. I'm not sick.

Roch. Why don't you consult my art?

Jane. I'm not silly.

Roch. Lies, lies, all—you are cold, you are sick, and you are silly.

Jane. Prove it.

Roch. In few words. You are cold, because you are alone; no contact strikes from you the fire that you possess. You are sick, because the lowliness of your position keeps from you the companionship of your equals in soul and intellect. You are silly, because suffer as you may, yet even to those who could and would sympathise with you, you disdain to reveal the heart-agony that wears away your life.

Jane. You might say this to any one, placed in my circumstances.

Roch. Find me another placed as you are; happiness is near you—within your very reach, and yet your obstinate but noble pride, keeps you from putting forth your hand to grasp it.

Jane. I don't understand enigmas.

Roch. If you wish me to speak more plainly, let me see your hand.

Jane. I know it's folly, all, but there—

(Holds hand.)

Roch. You don't! there's doubt in your look. You are not quite certain that it is folly; pshaw! I can make nothing of the hand, 'tis too fine; besides, destiny is not written there; no, 'tis in the eyes, the forehead, mouth, the expression of the face; let me look in your eyes.

Jane. Now you are coming to reality; I shall begin to have some faith in you presently.

Roch. Um! good, very good. I wonder what thoughts are busy in your heart, for I can only read them now—I can! What thoughts, I say, pass within you, while you sit in yonder room, with all the fine people passing before you like shadows in a magic lantern?

Jane. I feel tired often, sleepy sometimes, but seldom sad.

Roch. Then you have some secret hope that pleases you with whispers of the future!

Jane. None!

Roch. None? no! not when you hear, as you must do, tales of love and courtship, does not your heart yearn for a fitting mate? For instance, when Lady Blanche and he—you know who I mean—when they converse in soft, silvery whispering together, their fervid looks and low murmuring syllables uttering the bliss of each, then—

Jane. Then—ah! spare me—then I dare not think.

Roch. You have looked forward, have you not, and seen them married, and behold his bride happy?

Jane. No, I have not seen that; your witch's skill is at fault sometimes.

Roch. What in Heaven's name have you seen, then?

Jane. No matter. I came here to inquire, not to confess. I did not come to hear Mr. Rochester's fortune, but to listen to my own, and you have told me nothing of it.

Roch. Because your fortune is yet doubtful. I can read upon your features each passion of your heart, distinct as on a printed page. That eye, shining like dew, so soft and full of feeling, and yet in the cup of bliss, when offered, if there should be one drop of shame, or one flavour of remorse, how firm its determined glance; it would foster, not blight, it would earn gratitude, not wring tears of blood. Ah! what tenderness, but what inflexibility! Leave me; I rave in exquisite delirium; so far I have governed myself thoroughly; leave me, Jane.—The play is played out.

Jane. That voice—do I wake or dream?

Roch. Don't you know me, Jane—there, then, off ye landings! How do I play the Gipsy?

Jane. It was no Gipsy part you played with me.

Roch. Whose then, my own?

Jane. I don't know, sir; some unaccountable one. In short, you have been talking nonsense to make me do the same. I have your permission to retire, sir.

Roch. Not yet; I want to ask your advice. Now, Jane, call your fancy to your aid; suppose instead of the bright incarnation of womanhood which you are, you had been a wild boy, indulged from childhood upward; imagine yourself in a remote foreign land, conceive that you commit a capital error, no matter what, but one whose consequences must follow you through life, and taint all your existence; mind, I don't say a crime, my word is error. Well, heart-weary and soul-withered, you come home after years of voluntary banishment, you make a new acquaintance, you find in this stranger much of the bright and good qualities which you have sought for all your life, and but just encountered; such society brings higher wishes, purer feelings, and you desire to recommence your life, and pass the remnant of your days in a manner more worthy of a human being. To attain this end, are you justified in overleaping an obstacle of custom?

Jane. Sir, if any one you know has erred and suffered, let him look higher than his friends for strength to amend, and solace to heal!

Roch. But the instrument! the instrument! I tell you without parable, that I have been a worldly, dissipated, restless man. Oh! dare I to hope that I have found a comforting spirit? Jane, if the finger of scorn were pointed at me, what would you do?

Jane. If it were deserved, my tears would attest my sorrow; if not, I would dash the mocker to the earth, if strength of indignation could effect it.

Roch. Bold, brave girl. You know my strange temperament, and won't wonder if I make sudden resolutions. You must go.

Jane. Go, sir.

Roch. Yes, go. What business have you here; you know I am about to be married.

Jane. Soon, sir?

Roch. Very soon.

Jane. Well, sir, I shall be ready when the order to march comes.

Roch. It is come now, Miss Eyre—you must get a new situation.

Jane. The blow is greater, severer than I expected.

Roch. But your pride will master it.

Jane. It will—it does: it—oh, this is torture—

Roch. No, it don't. You are sorry to leave Thornfield.

Jane. I grieve to leave it. I love Thornfield. I love it, because I have lived in it a full and delightful life. I have not been trampled on—I have not been buried with inferior minds, and excluded from every glimpse of communion with what is bright and high, and energetic. I have talked face to face with what I revered, and I see the necessity for departure, and it is like looking on the necessity of death.

Roch. Where do you see the necessity?

Jane. You have placed it before me. Do you think I can stay to become nothing to you? Do you suppose I am a mere machine, without one spark of sense or feeling, and can bear to have my drop of living water dashed from my cup? Do you think, because I am lowly and obscure, that I have neither soul nor heart? You think wrongly if you do; and if heaven had gifted me with wealth, I should have made it as hard for you to leave me, as it is for me to leave you. I am not talking to you now, through the medium of custom, or even of mortal flesh; it is my spirit which addresses you, just as if both had passed through the grave, and we stood within the precincts of eternity equal, as we are.

Roch. As we are, and ever shall remain. I offer you my hand, my heart, and a share of all my possessions. Jane, decide my destiny!

Jane. You play a farce at which I merely laugh.

Roch. Unbelieving sceptic, you shall be convinced; the irresistible waves of destiny hurry me along; you strange—you almost unearthly thing—I love you as my own flesh, and I must have you for my own. Will you be mine?—at once, within the hour—say yes, and quickly.

Jane. Mr. Rochester!

Roch. Yes.

Jane. Let me look in your face.

Roch. Why?

Jane. Because I want to read your countenance!

Roch. There you will find it scarcely more legible than a crumpled page. Read on—only make haste, for I suffer. Jane, you torture me with that searching but yet generous look: you torture me.

Jane. How can I do that, if your offer be real; my only feelings must be gratitude and devotion.

Roch. Gratitude! Jane, accept me quickly.

Jane. Are you in earnest? Do you sincerely wish me to become your wife?

Roch. I swear it.

Jane. Then I am yours.

Roch. Come, come to me—my happiness is complete. Away! I will not give you time to change your mind. Prepare yourself at once—in my oratory we shall be wedded. Haste, haste, my own, own bride!—[Exit Jane.]—God pardon me, and man meddle not with me; she is mine, and I will hold her in the teeth of fate; it will atone—it will atone. Have I not found her friendless? and will I not guard and cherish, and solace her? Is there not love in my heart, and constancy in my resolves? I know Heaven sanctions what I do: for the world's judgment, I wash my hands

thereof—for man's opinion, I defy it. Hold! what am I about to do? Down, down thought!—sleep conscience; for in spite of all the powers of earth and hell combined, she must be mine. And then! for remorse and wretchedness. Well, let them come—Heaven pardon and pity me—my heart and brain are burning!

END OF ACT III.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*The Drawing-room at Rochester's.*

DOWAGER, LADY BLANCHE, MARY, LORD INGRAM, DENT, *discovered.*

Dow. Come here, Blanche my love; remember the importance of the crisis which is evidently approaching; and don't shake your hair too much out of curl.

John. A note for you, my lady.

Dow. It is from Rochester, and marked private. The long-expected declaration, no doubt. Blanche, calm your agitation, dear, while we see what he proposes in the way of dowry.

Lord Ing. Something enormous, I trust, to gild the fellow's atrocious vulgarity!

Dow. (*Reads.*) Good Heavens!

Dent. No bad news, I hope?

Lord Ing. Surely nothing can have occurred to break off the match?

Blan. Nothing, oh, nothing!

Dent. But death!

Lord Ing. Or bankruptcy.

Blan. (*Dowager sinks into a chair.*) You seriously alarm me, ma; has any accident occurred?

Dow. Accident!—a frightful and unexpected one.

Lord Ing. What can it possibly be?

Dent. Is he sick?

Lord Ing. Hurt?

Lady Blan. Dead?

Dow. Worse.

All. What?—what?

Dow. He's poor!

Lord Ing. Inconceivable calamity!

Dow. Here, Ingram, read this, and wonder at the fellow's presumption. My own one—(*To Blanche*)—I know in this, the most trying scene of your existence, you will comfort yourself as befits an Ingram—take my flacon, darling, and be heroic. Go on, Theodore.

Lord Ing. (*Reads.*) "I am ready to fulfil my contract, but honour, and a sincere desire for the happiness of her whom I love more than existence, prompt me to the avowal that the reputation of my wealth is far, very far, more than its reality; frankly, I am a poor man." Disgusting wretch!

Dent. Terrible reprobate!

Dow. Impudent monster!

Lady Blan. Ugly creature!

Lord Ing. What's this?—why, this is simply laughable. (*Reads.*) "However, if love for myself, and not for my possessions, animates your beautiful daughter, I shall await her coming in the Oratory; and my Chaplain shall join us in the silken fetters of wedlock." (*All laugh.*) Well, upon my soul! that is about the coolest piece of

effrontery ever attempted within the annals of Jeremy Diddlerism.

Dow. Don't weep for such an impostor, my precious—

Blan. It's not for him, ma; I don't care a pin for the creature itself; but this lovely house, those delicious grounds, ma, where I had absolutely planned all my alterations.

Lord Ing. And I had selected my suit of bachelor rooms, and actually named my favourite hunters; why, the fellow's a huge swindler!

Mary. I'm sorry you've lost such a nice fortune, Blanche, dear.

Dow. Don't be envious, child; come, darling, dry your sweet eyes—control your dear little feelings; your poor heart must suffer from this dreadful shock, I know, but it might have been worse; suppose this blow had come after the ceremony. We must leave, of course, as soon as possible.

Lord Ing. I vote we all go in a body to the fellow's oratory first, and take an affectionate leave. Now, I insist, mother;—hang it, ain't I the head of the house? Come, Dent, take Blanche; now, Dowager, dignity; prepare to frown the creature into oblivion.

[*Go up, closed in.*]

SCENE II.—*A Passage or corridor, dark.*

Enter JOHN, *frightened*, L. II.

John. Oh, Lord! I've seen it again; there can't be no sort of mistake this time—a wild-looking, ghost-like thing, with heavy hair, rushed by me at the end of the corridor. Ugh! what's that?—my heart beats like the fastest sort of a clock. There's something mysterious in the house—I knew there was, in spite of Grace's denial. Ugh! I can't look round often enough to be sure there's nobody behind me; glaring with glassy eyes;—there it is again! Oh, Lord! coming right through at me! Mercy! mercy! your ghostship!

GRACE rushes on L. H., and shakes him, she is frightened, but with a different expression.

Grace. Up, fool!

John. Is it you! phew! it's like a reprieve on the very gallows.

Grace. What have you seen?

John. A ghost! the ghost!

Grace. Nonsense; what way did she, I mean did it go?

John. Whatever it was, she or it, flew right up the grand staircase like a puff of tobacco smoke. Mercy on us, Grace, what can it be?

Grace. Away, and be silent.

John. Wasn't it a ghost, then, tell me that.

Grace. Yes; and a mischievous one; see, it's coming back, run!

John. Oh, lord!

Grace. Mischief! mischief! where will it end!

[*Bolts off.*]
[*Exit R. H.*]

SCENE III.—*The Oratory. Octagonal recess with large stained windows, practicable, beyond which a portion of the house may be seen, consisting of turrets, to show effect of fire at the end of Act; low railing at opening of recess. Organ music. ROCHESTER discovered.*

Roch. (*Impatiently.*) Why comes she not? my bounding soul would fain outstrip both time and

thought and reach the consummation of my hope, 'ere stern reflection, reason's officer, should cry, beware! Why will they leave me thus alone with conscience nicely scrupulous.—Away! away! I will not think; in that direction madness lies; what, ho! (*Noise without.*) Ah, here at last; be calm, my soul. (*Again noise.*) 'Tis Ingram's voice; yes, as I live, 'tis he and his proud sister. Have I wrongfully judged her, and my touchstone proven her to be right ringing metal? if so, I'm trebly cursed. They're here.

Enter DOWAGER, INGRAM, BLANCHE, DENT, and LADY MARY, R. H.

Suspense were more than agony, I must be resolved at once; how shall I welcome thee, lady: as my disinterested love, bride of my heart and not of my wealth? You are silent! be thanked for it, ye immortal powers. Speak, Blanche!

Dow. Hold, sir; 'tis time this insolent mockery should have a termination; can you smile, deceiver, and behold the victim of your wicked perfidy!

Roch. Perfidy! to whom, then, was your daughter betrothed, to me, or to my money-chest?

Dow. Pshaw; what romantic nonsense is this; speak to him, Ingram, I can have no patience with the poor impostor.

Lord Ing. 'Pon my life it's a little awkward, lady mother; but as I'm the head of the house, I suppose I must.

Roch. Let me look at you, Blanche. By heaven, her features are as calm as marble. What are promises and protestations, gentle looks and whispered sentences—all hollowness, pretence, and lies.

Lord Ing. Come, come, Rochester, this is a most unimaginative age; that sort of talk reads tolerably well in novels, but sounds somewhat impertinent in real life. Your paper heroes are privileged individuals, but flesh and blood people don't feel inclined to listen to such improbable mouthing.

Roch. Miserable idiot!

Lord Ing. (*To Dent.*) Did you hear that?

Dent. Distinctly.

Lord Ing. What ought I to do?

Dent. Nothing?

Roch. I have no time to waste—be explicit. Do you wish this match to be broken off!

Lord Ing. Most undoubtedly. Do you suppose that I would suffer my sister to be sacrificed to a man—

Roch. Whose heart outweighs his wealth. I thought so, and am not disappointed; still I must have confirmation from the Lady Blanche herself. Speak, lady; would you have me release you from your promise?

Blan. Mr. Rochester, I—

Dow. She would—

Roch. Hush! let her speak, I'll hear none other.

Blan. I like you very much—

Dow. As a friend.

Roch. Silence! Proceed, Lady Blanche.

Blan. My mother answers for me, sir.

Dow. Affectionate creature!

Roch. Am I released?

(*Motions Dowager to silence—a pause—he watches Blanche, as she quietly exclaims.*)

Blan. Yes!

(*Rochester walks about quietly triumphant.*)

Dow. Unconditionally; but we shall always be

most happy to receive your visits in a friendly way, Mr. Rochester. Shall we not, Ingram?

Lord Ing. To be sure, and I shall visit him in the shooting season. (*Aside.*) Don't be disconsolate, there's a good fellow, we're all devilish sorry, you know. Keep up your spirits.

Roch. I mean to do so. My kind considerate friends, now listen to me all of ye. Had there been one touch of heart—one spark of noble feeling in that woman's nature—I should deeply regret the stratagem which I have used. (*All start.*)

Lord Ing. Stratagem! I'm afraid we're sold!

Roch. But as it is, her unworthiness has, like a dull foil, made lighter still the starlike radiance of her for whose beloved sake, I fling aside the gauds of title and of name. Come forth, sole mistress of this heart and home.

(*Leads forward JANE EYRE—all start.*)

Dow. } The governess!

Blan. }

Lord Ing. Lady mother, you are checkmated.

(*All the servants cluster round—the chaplain enters the enclosure.*)

Dow. Marry the governess! revolting!

Roch. Yes, the governess! one pure instant of whose companionship were worth a whole eternity with such as ye. Come, be witnesses of the fulfilment of my soul's uttermost desire. Look up, sweet love—look up—a few moments nerve. (*Leads her towards enclosure—large bell, hastily rung—noise without.*) What interruption's this?

Grace. (*Heard outside.*) "She has escaped!"

Roch. Horror! what do I hear; must my cup of joy be dashed from me, even in the moment of my greatest bliss? never. Proceed with the ceremony. (*Noise increases—bell louder.*)

Enter JOHN.

John. "The house is in flames."

(*Confusion—the oratory window is thrust open with terrible crash, and the maniac wife appears in the opening, a torch in her hand.*)

Roch. My wife!

Jane. His wife!

(*Faints—portion of the house beyond seen in flames.*)

END OF ACT IV.

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*Plain chamber—JANE discovered.*

Jane. Twelve months have passed since that fearful day. Oh, too faithful memory, why didst thou call up the loathsome picture in its terrible reality. I see it now before my eyes, as vividly as when stricken by the bolt of destiny, even at the very threshold of my joy: now almost a bride, and in an instant alone—alone; the Christmas frost had come at midsummer, and the smiling way of life that seemed to blush so full of flowers, became in a moment pathless with untrodden snow; and yet it was not for myself this bitterness of anguish—it was for him—that I dare not deem him worthy; that the pure and bright ideal that I had thought was found in him, should be so blurred and blackened. I have worshipped a false image, and I must tear it from the altar I myself have raised.

Alas! alas! 'tis not a vapour sunshine can disperse—'tis not a sand traced effigy storms can wash away; it is a name engraved upon a tablet, which must last as long as the marble upon which it is inscribed. Oh! for some friendly hand to point my proper road. I fear myself there is a sweet, strange, dreamy spell pervades this solemn eventime my failing sense cannot resist. I'm powerless beneath its influence. Oh, if in dreams, good angels e'er suggest the better course, may such welcome visitors be mine.

(Sleeps—Music. The scene becomes luminous, and Rochester is seen stretching his hand towards her—he exclaims—"Jane! Jane! where art thou?"—vision vanishes—Jane starts up.)

I am here, Rochester, my still beloved: this is no deception of the mind—no witchcraft: I heard him distinctly—the music of his words yet rings in my ears. Again he speaks—he calls me, in tones of suffering. He may be dying, and I am not near to look at my last of love and life. Rochester, wait for me—I come, I come!

[Exit.

SCENE II.—Interior of a Cottage.

Enter JOHN, R. H.

John. Well, I never did see any one take on for any body in such an outrageous way as my poor master does for that there governess. One would naturally suppose that the whole race of soft sexes was abolished from the face of the inhabitable globe, which everybody knows, and we in particular, they are not.

Enter MRS. JOHN, late Grace, L. H.

Mrs. D. Now, turnip skull, what are you wasting your time there for?

John. None of your vegetable allusions if you please, or else I might insinuate something respecting carrots, Mrs. Downey.

Mrs. D. Alluding to my hair, I presume, Mr. D.

John. Precisely, Mrs. D.

Mrs. D. Before we were married you used to call it auburn.

John. That's the poetical for red, you know; only an allowable ante-nuptial fiction, as my old master, the lawyers, used to say.

Mrs. D. I'll fiction your thick head with the broom-handle if you don't mind.

John. Ah, you let the devil's hoof peep out now. I suppose we'll have the horns soon. You were a different sort of an individual when you went sneaking about Thornfield with your bit of bread and cheese, awaiting on that she-devil as was shut up there; you couldn't say boo to a goose then.

Mrs. D. I've often had a chance since.

John. Mrs. D., respect the head of your family.

Mrs. D. There's nothing in it.

John. Honour the provider of your wittles. Oh, why did I ever marry?

Mrs. D. That's a question that always comes too late; and moreover is never asked except by a good-for-nothing husband; see, who is that lady beckoning to you. Stupid, go and see what she wants—while I get master's dinner on the do.

[Exit into house.

Enter JANE, slightly concealing her face, L. H.

Jane. Is this Ferndean Farm?

John. It is, marm.

Jane. Your name is John Downey.

John. I never had no other as I knows on, marm. (Aside.) Exceptin' now and then, turnip skull and such like.

Jane. They told me at the inn that you could give me the information that I require. You know Thornfield Hall?

John. Yes, marm; I lived there once; I was the late Mr. Rochester's own man.

Jane. The late—I—

John. Dear me, marm, anything the matter?

Jane. A spasm—'twill soon be over. Have I then lived and hoped for this? With one simple word to be for ever crushed, destroyed.

Jane. When did Mr. Rochester die?

John. I don't mean the present gentleman.

Jane. Present? he is alive then.

John. Oh, yes, marm, he's alive?

Jane. Thank Heaven! I can bear anything now! the light of hope and joy rekindled! Does he live at Thornfield Hall now?

John. No marm; no one is living there. You must be a stranger here or you would have known that the Hall was burnt down last harvest time.

Jane. Burnt? the hall?

John. Yes, marm. The fire broke out at dead of night. It was a terrible sight. It nearly caught fire once before, at a strange time—there was a wedding about to take place.

Jane. But the last fire; how did it originate?

John. The same way. A raving lunatic, that turned out to be Mr. Rochester's wife, after having made several attempts, succeeded at last.

Jane. And was he! was Mr. Rochester in the house?

John. Oh, yes, marm, and never left it until everybody else was safe. Then he tried to get his mad wife out of the place, but she fled to the roof, where she yelled and gave a spring and in the next moment she lay upon the pavement.

Jane. Great Heaven! Dead?

John. Yes, marm, as dead as the very stones she lay on.

Jane. One question more. My labouring heart throbs painfully at each pulsation. I scarcely dare to ask him from fear. While there's delay there still is hope, and yet, suspense is anguish. What of the master of the Hall—is he in the country?

John. Yes, marm. He can't get out of it well, now. He's a fixture.

Jane. There is an awful meaning in your words.

John. He's blind, marm, stone blind.

Jane. Thank heaven! I had feared a worse calamity; the loss of reason—but where? do you know where he now is?

John. He ain't far off, marm; he's in the garden yonder.

Jane. So near. I was not prepared for this, John. Do you not know me?

John. Dear heart—why it's the governess. Oh, but this will be a happy meeting for us all.

Jane. Let us retire from observation.

John. You forget, miss, he can't see a mite.

Jane. Oh, terrible affliction—and I to be so long estranged from him, when words of solace were so needed. My very soul yearns to bring him comfort; it is not now a crime—it is a duty.

John. You'll see him, miss, won't you?

Jane. See him, John! his very shadow in the sun shall not be nearer or more constant than I, while life remains.

John. This is indeed a joyful return. I shouldn't wonder but it will even smooth Mrs. D's wrinkles. I'm married, miss; don't you recollect Grace Pool, she's what folks call a good woman in the main; I wish she was in it, just to try the experiment.

Jane. Quick! let me see her; I must consult with her the means of introducing myself to Rochester. [*Exit John.*] Be firm, be firm, my heart—no shrinking now; this is thy duty; perform it well; even though neglect and coldness be the recompense.

Re-enter JOHN, with water.

John. He has just called for a glass of water.

Jane. His kind fate points out a means for me to see him without danger of too sudden a recognition. Give me the water, John; I'll take it to him. Now, courage, courage.

[*Exit, R. H.*]

SCENE III. — *Exterior of Farm House — ROCHESTER discovered—his arms stretched out—he is blind—his hair streaming in the breeze.—The picture as before in the vision.*

Roch. Jane! Jane! ah, if you but knew that sky and mountain, field and flower, are shut out from me for ever, you would not desert the proud, strong man in the day of his affliction. In the wickedness of my heart I spurned all control, and would have done thee wrong, angel of brightness and purity; but I am punished, sorely punished. In vain for me the day dawns and breaks, the sun rises and the seasons change. All is to me a blank; my existence shrouded in unending night. Twelve months—twelve long, leaden, fearful months have passed since that bright earthly vision fled from me—even as the pure and good will ever flee from the assassin of the soul; yet how often has the cruel delusion seized me that she was in my very presence, though unseen; just as I feel this fire's genial glow, but cannot see the flames which causes it.

Enter JANE, L. H., with tray, tumbler of water on it.

Even now my mocking sense would almost persuade me that I heard her breathe; out upon this heart-consuming deception—it almost drives me to despair. (*Sits.*)

Jane. Ah, what a sight—what a sight!

(*Very quietly.*)

Roch. There is some one near me. Grace, have you brought the water. (*Jane hands it to him—he drinks.*) Thanks. No news, I suppose; silent—ah, I knew it! I knew it. Thus for ever must I stretch the chord of expectation and of life until they snap together. Hush! did you not hear something—a small quiet murmuring sound like hers, so like Jane's. I heard it but a short time since; it said, "*Rochester, I come! I come!*" as distinctly as ever sound reached my ear. Ah! malicious spirits that sport with human hearts, this is the cruellest pastime. I hear nothing. Oh! for one week's eyesight. I would find her or a grave. (*Jane sighs.*) Who is that? that wasn't you, Grace? Is there anyone with you? answer me. Is that you, Grace?

Jane. Grace is in the kitchen, sir.

Roch. (*Starts up in violent agitation.*) I know that voice, if the cheating demon is not practising on my sense once more. Who is this? What is it? Speak again, whoever you are.

Jane. Will you have a little more water, sir?

Roch. Again—great Heaven! this is distraction. Why don't you tell me whether you are a living thing or another of those tantalizing fiends that worry me to the verge of madness? Who or what are you?

Jane. I come to wait on you.

Roch. Delusion, nothing but delusion! What sweet madness has seized me?

Jane. No delusion, sir, no madness; your mind is too strong for delusion, your health too sound for frenzy.

Roch. And where is this speaker? Is it only a voice? Oh! I cannot see, but I must touch you, or my heart will stop and my brain burst. (*Jane approaches him—He takes her hand.*) Her very fingers—her small slight fingers; if so, there must be more. (*Touches, and finally clasps her in his arms.*) Is it Jane? What is it? it has her shape and feature.

Jane. Yes, Rochester, and her voice and heart. Jane is here—here with you.

Roch. In truth and in flesh! my living Jane!

Jane. You hold me in your arms. I am not vacant like the air.

Roch. But if I let you go, will you not fade away, vanish as all the rest have done?

Jane. Never! never! from this day.

Roch. Never, says the vision; but don't you know, unearthly thing, that bright as are these delicious moments, they must have an end. I know that in a moment this hand, which I foolishly deem real, will elude my grasp, and that voice which sounded to my enraptured sense like heavenly music, will die away upon the echoes and be heard no more. Gentle, soft dream, you will fly me like those who came before, many, oh, many a time.

Jane. Is it a dream to grasp your kind hand with the warm truthfulness of love; to tell you that I am here—I, Jane, your own Jane; to avow that love and glory in that avowal; to say that my life, hitherto dark and hopeless, is once more bathed in the brilliancy of an enduring joy; that my heart, which famished for your presence, is sated from the very fullness of its banquet?

Roch. It is you, Jane—my living, breathing, loving, constant Jane. Come near me, and let me fancy that I see you with these rayless orbs. I cannot! I cannot! but I feel your presence like a shower of sunlight on my heart; and you've come back to me again, and will you stay with me?

Jane. Unless you object! I will be your neighbour, your nurse, your housekeeper, your companion; to read to you, to walk with you, to sit with you, to be eyes and hands to you—that is, if you wish it, not otherwise.

(*Disengaging herself a little.*)

Roch. No, no, Jane. You must not go. I have touched you, heard you, felt the comfort of your presence, the sweetness of your consolation, and I cannot give up those joys; my very soul demands you, Jane. There are other thoughts within my brain which I dare not utter. What right has such a ruin as I to bid a budding woodbine cover its decay with freshness?

Jane. You are not a ruin, sir. Friends, troops of friends will cluster around you.

Roch. Friend! I want a nearer tie, Jane, my Jane; do you not comprehend me? You do, and I may speak the wish of my soul. Jane, will you be my wife?

Jane. I will.

Roch. What! wife to the poor blind man, whom you will have to lead by the hand?

Jane. Yes!

Roch. Truly, Jane?

Jane. Most truly, sir!

Roch. Oh, my darling! Heaven will bless and reward you for the sacrifice.

Jane. Sacrifice? If ever I did a good deed in my life, if ever I thought a good thought, if ever I prayed a sincere and blameless prayer, if ever I wished a sacred wish, I am rewarded now. To be your wife is to be as happy as I can be on earth.

(*Shout outside.*)

Roch. What is that? John?

Enter JOHN.

Roch. What means that shout?

John. Have you forgotten, sir, that this is your birthday?

Roch. Truly, I had, John. But now I accept the omen as a good one, for my life is again renewed through the heaven-gift of thy pure and true love, my earth-angel.

John. Your tenants, who love and respect you, sir, have brought their poor but honest gifts; it would make them and all of us so happy, sir, if you would accept them.

Roch. Let them approach. My wife, John, that is to be shortly, will accept them for me.

John. Hurrah! there will be another shout for that. Come, friends!

Roch. I cannot see their merriment, my love; but what will the sum of all their joy be, compared with mine?

Enter PEASANTS.—Jane and Rochester advance.

John. Don't spare your lungs. A cheer for our kind master and his intended bride.

(*Hurrah all. Present bouquets to Jane.*)

Roch. My good fellows—I—speak to them for me, Jane, the fulness of my joy chokes my very utterance.

Jane. I am myself too happy for many words. My friends, he whose ambition is to be the kind landlord, and the good adviser, cannot, alas! behold your kindly glances, but he thanks you for your generous sympathy, as I do from my heart.

(*Jane leads Rochester to seat, a device is fixed by the Peasants, having printed thereon in flowers, "The Farmer's Friend." Garlands depend from the centre, which are held up by Peasants, forming a canopy for Jane and Rochester.—Music.*)

Curtain.

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58 I have Plucked the Fairest Flower
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